refuse Shell the right to dump the rig in the North Sea. Major, a strong supporter of the original plan, refused, leaving Kohl and others throughout Europe to call for the continuation and expansion of a boycott on Shell gasoline.

Economic pressure mounted as other nations, including Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, and some consumers in Britain, joined the boycott that began in Germany. For three weeks in June, business at Germany's 1,728 Shell stations was reportedly down by approximately 30%, representing a loss as high as 24 million dollars. In addition, German Shell stations received numerous bomb threats and 50 cases of vandalism, including one firebombing, one shooting, and an undetonated letter bomb. Although no one was injured, Shell labeled the boycotts the result of purely political actions devoid of reason and accused Greenpeace and their other opposition of instigating a terrorist attack.

Finally, amid the waning support of the European community, Shell unexpectedly dropped the North Sea disposal plan, saying that it felt it was "in an untenable position . . . without wider support from the governments participating in the Oslo-Paris Convention." The Oslo-Paris convention recently declared a ban on deep-sea disposal of such equipment.

Norway, one of the few remaining supporters of the plan, offered safe anchorage to the rig, provided that Shell meet certain requirements. The Brent Spar is floating at a location at the northern tip of the Shetland Islands as Shell waits for results of the Norwegian permitting process, which would allow them to moor the buoy for one year in Norwegian waters while they formulate a new disposal plan. Once they do, their problems may still not be over: damaged during its construction by the buildup of differential stresses on the storage tanks, the Brent Spar faces the ongoing risk of accidents during towing, upending, and disassembly. Shell estimates that on-land disposal will cost $46 million dollars plus the possible loss of a British tax incentive, versus the original estimate of $16 million for deep-sea disposal. However, while Greenpeace acknowledges that on-land disposal will be difficult, expensive, and dangerous, they insist that the dismantling is possible using present technology and is a sounder environmental alternative.

EHPnet

Recent events surrounding the successful attempt by the environmental group Greenpeace to force the Royal Dutch Shell oil company to dismantle a decommissioned oil rig rather than sink it in the North Sea focused attention on the issue of environmental assaults on the world's oceans. In a perhaps less dramatic but more detailed effort, a major new traveling exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History is also aimed at the issue of oceans.

Described as "the culmination of a four-year effort to study and understand environmental issues affecting the health of the world's oceans," the exhibit, Ocean Planet, opened on 22 April 1995. After eight months in Washington, DC, Ocean Planet will travel to 11 American cities through the end of the millennium. For those who may not be able to visit the exhibit, a companion exhibit is available on-line via the World Wide Web.

Upon entering the on-line exhibit, users are presented with the floor plan of the Ocean Planet Exhibition as currently presented at the Museum of Natural History. From this map users can go to any part of the exhibit hall by clicking on the name of the room they want to visit or take a special tour designed by the museum's curator. The exhibit traces the global benefits that oceans provide in terms of food and health products, recreation, and economic growth, as well as the impact of human activity on ocean ecosystems. Examples of this impact detailed in the exhibit show that polar ecosystems are no longer beyond the reach of human activity: tourism, commercial fishing, and pollution are putting pressure on populations of penguins, whales, seals, and krill; intertidal zones may support as many as two thousand species, but these interfaces between land and sea are in jeopardy from coastal development, land-based runoff, and ocean pollution; and oil pollution disasters make headlines, but hundreds of millions of gallons of oil quietly end up in the seas every year, mostly from nonaccidental sources such as road runoff.

Hyperlinks in the exhibit "rooms" such as ocean science, oceans in peril, and resources provide brief but informative descriptions of topics of environmental interest. The ocean science portion of the exhibit provides discussions ranging from recent discoveries of hydrothermal vents, previously unknown marine animals, and volcanic fields, to how ocean currents are tracked and the relationship between oceans and climate. The oceans in peril section provides overviews of marine pollution, divided into subtopics such as oil pollution, toxic contaminants, non-point-source pollution, and mining and dumping; habitat destruction, which deals with the effects of deforestation and the loss of wetlands on oceans; fishing issues such as overfishing, ecosystem changes, and pollution by bombs and poison; and global change issues including climate change, ozone depletion, and population.

Perhaps the most useful section of the exhibit for environmental researchers is the resources room. This section includes an extensive list of hyperlinks to oceanographic and environmental resources on the Internet ranging from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Distributed Ocean Data System to the International Arctic Buoy Program, the Save Our Seas home page, and the Small Islands Information Network. Users interested in ocean issues should dive into this exhibit at URL:http://seawifs.gsfc.nasa.gov/ocean_planet.html.

The Cost of Living

A fish caught off the coast of Spain two years ago sold for more than what most people pay for a car. The $70,000 price tag for the 715-pound bluefin tuna (in high demand in Japan) was a harbinger of financial repercussions that will result from the human race taxing its natural resources to feed and clothe a soaring population, said Lester Brown, president of the nonprofit WorldWatch Institute, speaking at the 20th annual conference of the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP).

The conference, held June 10–13 in Washington, DC, focused on such complex topics as watershed management, risk-assessment methodology, and innovative methods of preventing pollution. But Brown reminded the participants that the heart of the world's environmental problems remains a glut of people. "The world cannot continue to add 90 million people a year without getting into trouble," he said. "It's been nearly three years ago that the famine started in Somalia. In 1992, 300,000 Somalis died. It took the world just 29 hours to make up that loss. That's how fast the world population is growing."